



ACADEMIC CONTINUITY TEAM

Maintaining Course Objectives while Responding to Student Feedback—A Faculty Member’s Experience

Dr. Janet Gbur, part-time faculty in Mechanical, Industrial, and Manufacturing Engineering, spent some of her lecture time recently to invite all her students to an open discussion on what remote learning course strategies were working for them in her class as well as others—as well as what isn’t working. Her intent was to express to her students that she was invested in their learning, and wanted to support them learning the course concepts.

As a class, she and her students came to consensus on what a few “reasonable changes” to the course might be without losing the core learning objectives. She posted updated documents and timelines with the newest information color-coded for quick reference. From the class discussion, she compiled a list of challenges that her students were facing, both in her class as well as in others, and what changes she made to her course as a result:

1. **Dues dates for assessments are all over the place.** Each course is different and even within each course it may differ (upload at 3, upload at noon, etc.). If a student takes 4 courses, and if each has 4 different times for dues dates to Blackboard, it can get a bit confusing to track. Janet decided to move all of her postings and due dates for all items to 11:59 pm - they have until the end of the day for everything.
2. **Lecture notes/slides not posted or not posted timely.** There are concerns with some courses that notes/slides do not accompany the video. She determined it was clear from the student response that it is really helpful to have some outline, at the minimum, to reference with a recording. If the lecture is live and not recorded, something written/typed is really needed.
3. **Timed assessments.** Adding 15 minutes to a regular assessment time is usually not enough

"wobble room" to scan/image/upload and account for internet issues. Dr. Gbur decided to change the format of the exam to a "take home" style where the exam contains more open-ended questions paired with the calculations and provide a reasonable time frame that they can upload the final document.

4. **Dealing with hand calculations:** Students expressed a great deal of stress with timed online Blackboard exams, particularly for classes that are computationally involved. Dr. Gbur decided providing a written document that they can download, work on by hand (either by printing or hand calculations on graph paper), and upload as a .pdf (using Adobe or Genius Scan app from their phone) was the most reasonable and students felt the most comfortable doing - it's also most similar to what they would do in class in a normal environment.
5. **Teach yourself.** There was discussion about a course where the solution was simply read the book. Not ideal for STEM courses - students expressed that they did not intentionally enroll in online courses, they really feel they need the additional explanation and discussion they might normally receive in a face-to-face environment.

Dr. Gbur reflected on this class exercise, saying,

“The work load does shift to me a bit more, but the outcome is that they get the flexibility needed to get assignments completed, they feel like they have a bit of ownership in how we are moving forward, the assignments are more in line with what they would have done in class anyway, and I still have a mechanism to evaluate learning.”

Thank you to Janet for sharing what she has tried this semester to both ensure students are reaching the intended outcomes for the course while being responsive in this rapid remote learning transition!